

Interview #5

Informant: Mr. Norman Craig, Health Educator, Pan-American Sanitary

Bureau, Mexico, D. F.

Place: Baltimore Hotel, Los Angeles

Time: 11:00-12:00 A.M., Dec. 16, 1956

(m W.W. II)

N.C.: Doctors came in regularly and provided a clinic service. The toughest cases were referred to specialists in nearby cities.

H.A.: Were these Public Health/Physicians who came in?

N.C.: No, private practitioners whose services were contracted under the program. I must say that I blush as I look back on my ignorance of that time. I knew nothing about the folk medicine of Mexico, and so when these fellows came in with complaints that the doctors and I had never heard of, we could only conclude they were either lazy or a little touched in the head. It ended with the doctors giving them colored aspirin for almost everything...

H.A.: Things like snecho, mal ojo...

N.C.: Yes, and bilis. Of course, the poor braceros were no happier about the whole thing than we were. They ended up, many of them, by going to practitioners in town who put on a little ceremony -- you know, "see your own heart and lungs working," things like that. They had to pay for it out of their own pockets, but I guess it was more similar to what they were used to in their own culture.

H.A.: I'm glad you brought this up, because, actually, as I see it, folk medicine is the very heart of our study. Many other people, of course, have looked into Mexican folk medicine, but who hope to systematize it in a new way, oriented toward our practical problem.

N.C.: We are interested in the same thing in our Guadalupe project. We want to learn how much health attitudes change while braceros are in the United States, whether they remain changed when they return to Mexico, and whether they serve as an instrument in changing the attitudes of others. I'm sure you are going to be of great assistance to us.

H.A.: Oh, I'm sure we'll gain at least as much from you.

N.C.: Health departments in Mexico, by the way, are now actively thoroughly committed to working certain appropriate demands from folk medicine into their programs. It was a long struggle to get the physicians down there and in Central America to see things our way, but I think we have that battle won now.

H.A.: The question now is whether we can persuade doctors and others here in this country to make similar changes.

N.C.: Yes, that's the problem. I wish you luck!

folk medicine